

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A sample element for holding a volume of bodily fluid drawn from the skin of a patient at a withdrawal site, said sample element comprising:
 - a housing defining a sample chamber therein; and
 - a barrier having a first side configured to contact the skin of the patient at said withdrawal site, and a second side in fluid communication with said sample chamber, said barrier being configured to be pierced by a lance, to permit said bodily fluid to pass from said first side to said second side.
2. The sample element of Claim 1, wherein said barrier is formed from a substantially nonporous material.
3. The sample element of Claim 2, wherein said barrier, in the absence of an opening pierced therein, is configured to permit substantially none of said bodily fluid to pass from said first side to said second side.
4. The sample element of Claim 1, wherein said barrier, when placed against the skin of a patient and pierced, is configured to permit substantially none of said bodily fluid to pass from said second side to said first side.
5. The sample element of Claim 1, further comprising an adhesive disposed on said first side of said barrier.
6. The sample element of Claim 1, wherein said sample chamber is reagentless.
7. The sample element of Claim 1, wherein said sample chamber is at least partially defined by a window.
8. The sample element of Claim 7, wherein said window is transmissive of infrared radiation.

9. The sample element of Claim 7, wherein said barrier is more easily pierced by a lance than is said window.

10. The sample element of Claim 1, wherein said barrier is more easily pierced by a lance than is an adjacent portion of said housing.

11. The sample element of Claim 1, further comprising a supply passage extending from said sample chamber, said supply passage having a first sidewall adjacent said barrier, said barrier being more easily pierced by a lance than is said first sidewall.

12. The sample element of Claim 1, further comprising a separator located between said second side of said barrier and said sample chamber.

13. A method of drawing a bodily fluid from the skin of a patient at a withdrawal site, said method comprising:

placing a first side of a barrier against the skin of the patient at said withdrawal site;

forming a first opening through said barrier and a second opening in the skin of the patient at said withdrawal site, said first opening and said second opening being in fluid communication; and

placing a sample chamber in fluid communication with a second side of said barrier.

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein placing said sample chamber in fluid communication with said second side of said barrier, comprises placing said sample chamber in fluid communication with said first opening.

15. The method of Claim 13, further comprising causing said bodily fluid to flow into said sample chamber.

16. The method of Claim 15, further comprising causing said bodily fluid to flow through a separator before flowing into said sample chamber.

17. The method of Claim 13, further comprising affixing said first side of said barrier to the skin of the patient with an adhesive.

18. The method of Claim 13, further comprising removing said barrier from the skin of the patient.

19. The method of Claim 18, further comprising removing residual bodily fluid from said withdrawal site with said barrier.

20. The method of Claim 13, further comprising analyzing the bodily fluid.

21. The method of Claim 13, further comprising minimizing after-bleed.

22. The method of Claim 13, further comprising reducing, with said barrier, the degree to which contaminants from the surface of the skin of the patient enter said bodily fluid.

23. A sample element for holding a volume of bodily fluid, said sample element comprising:

a housing having a sample chamber therein, and a flow path extending from said sample chamber; and

a barrier disposed across said flow path, said barrier having a first side configured to contact the skin of a patient at a lancing site;

said flow path being enclosed on all sides except where said flow path joins said sample chamber such that, upon formation of an opening in said barrier, fluid may flow from said first side, through said flow path and into said sample chamber.

24. The sample element of Claim 23, wherein said barrier has a second side in fluid communication with said sample chamber.

25. The sample element of Claim 23, wherein said barrier is pierceable to permit bodily fluid to pass through said barrier.

26. The sample element of Claim 23, wherein said sample chamber is reagentless.

27. The sample element of Claim 23, wherein said sample chamber is at least partially defined by a window.

28. The sample element of Claim 27, wherein said window is transmissive of infrared radiation.

29. The sample element of Claim 27, wherein said barrier is more easily pierced by a lance than is said window.

30. The sample element of Claim 23, wherein said barrier is more easily pierced by a lance than is an adjacent portion of said housing.

31. The sample element of Claim 23, further comprising a supply passage extending from said sample chamber, said supply passage having a first sidewall adjacent said barrier, said barrier being more easily pierced by a lance than is said first sidewall.

32. The sample element of Claim 23, wherein said flow path comprises a supply passage.

33. The sample element of Claim 32, wherein said flow path comprises a supply passage and an entry chamber in fluid communication with said supply passage.

34. The sample element of Claim 23, further comprising a separator located in said flow path.